REPORT

Community Dialogue
With Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

Work commissioned by the Welsh Government - Anti-Racism Action Plan.
Environment, Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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Introduction

This work is part of the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Action Plan which is dedicated to creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030. At this stage, it seeks to get a better understanding and gain insight into ethnic minorities' experiences of racism related to climate change, environment and food. For that purpose, a consultation was sought by the Welsh Government with members of the Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in Wales focusing in those areas. The aim is to understand what needs to change and to make adequate changes that could make immediate and positive impact in the lives of the Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) communities in the UK are often grouped together as they share many commonalities. Some of these include the way they are viewed by the society at large, authorities and agencies, often sharing anti-Traveller/Gypsy/Roma sentiments due to their perceived wandering lifestyle. There are many differences between the groups, however. For instance, even though Gypsies and the Roma share a common history, language and origins, linked back to the Indian subcontinent some thousand years ago (Fraser 1992), the terms they prefer to ascribe to themselves are different, i.e., even though many Romani communities across Europe has sought to disassociate themselves with the pejorative terms 'Gypsy,' '*Tsigan*,' '*Zigeuner*,' '*Ciganos*,' etc. The term 'Gypsy' was originally derived from the popular belief that they are 'Egyptians,' due to their darker complexions, different, 'exotic' looks, apparel, and them being associated with magic. The term *Gypsy* has remained in the UK and is the preferred way by the groups themselves, even though they also identify themselves as *Romani Gypsies* and *Romanichals*. The Roma groups in the UK are usually nationals of EU/European countries who have come to Wales, and other parts of the UK, for various reasons including work, in search of better lives and to escape hardships in their countries of origin, or to re-join the members of family who have been settled already in the country (Brown et al. 2014; Marinov 2019). These groups have preferred to self-identify themselves as *Roma*, which is the politically correct term adopted by international and regional organisations, including EU institutions. There are many Romani sub-groups which may differ based on their internal self-appellations, traditional occupations,

dialects of Romani language, use of the Romani language, sense of belonging, religious affiliation, among other things.

Travellers in the UK are to be considered as different from the (Romani) Gypsies and the Roma as they have a different history tracing it back to Ireland, rather than India, different linguistic and cultural characteristics (Bhreatnach 2007). What they share in common with the Roma and Gypsies is their perceived nomadic lifestyles and also the largely negative ways they are perceived by the society at large.

In the UK, Gypsies and Irish Travellers are thus grouped together because of their, sometimes, preferred ways to stay and live together in traveller sites and in their caravans. Thus, for the purpose of this consultation, Gypsies and Travellers have been studied together as both groups share physical spaces and live together. The Roma, conversely, do not live in caravans or in Gypsy/Traveller sites, but in rented or owned accommodation and for that reason the Roma were studied and presented separately in this study. All three groups have been officially recognised as ethnic groups (Haynes et al. 2020; List of ethnic groups n.d.). The numbers of the GRT communities in the UK has not been recorded in some national statistics and there has been no official data on their numbers before to the 2011 Census. For the first time, in Census for 2011, a check box was included for the 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' ethnic group. For that year, the Census recorded 57,680 Gypsies and Travellers (making up 0.1 per cent of the total population) while there is no recorded data, or 'Roma' check box, to account for the number of Roma at the time. In the 2021 Census, a rubric for Roma has been introduced and recorded 100,981 Roma (or 0.2 per cent of the total population of England and Wales). According to the 2021 Census, the number of Gypsies and Travellers are recorded as 67,768 (making up 0.1 per cent of the total population) (Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021 2022; Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller ethnicity summary 2022). We should be aware that many Gypsies, Roma and Travellers do not freely reveal their heritage and it is not uncommon for them to be distrusting of government surveys, representative/officials, and other people. These issues of mistrust and doubt could be understood as a side effect of their lived experiences, treatment, stigma, discrimination, and perceptions by the larger society. Therefore, official data coming from institutions such as the Office for National Statistics, Annual Population Survey, or the Department for Transport's National Survey should be considered only as a guidance or approximation. The Annual Population Survey (ASP) and the Department for Transport's National Survey themselves also recorded a small number of responses by GRT in their surveys.

Methodology

For this consultation with GRT communities, it was envisaged that focus groups with Gypsies and Travellers and Roma in Wales should be carried out. Focus groups was identified as the most appropriate methodology as it incorporates the views of several respondents of the same group, gives them the opportunity to discuss and elaborate between each other and offers a certain degree of credibility and representation (Morgan & Kreuger 1993). Focus groups also can be perceived as empowering for its participants as it purposefully seek their opinions, experiences and suggestions which can inform policy, and also that their opinion is valued and important (Urwin & Naynes 1998). Furthermore, in a focus group interaction between the participants, the language they use, as well as partaking could provide crucial clues of the participants' views of the world (Kitzinger 1994, 1995).

Not a single methodology has its limitations and focus groups should not be considered as 'representative' of the larger community or the communities they represent. That is because of the relatively small number of participants taking part as informants of the focus groups. Also, even though the focus groups are guided and moderated by moderators, participants may diverge out of the given topic and bring up and discuss other issues that they see relevant. Another limitation is that the opinions of some participants may be unheard as they are less talkative or unable to voice them out a larger group. Thus, we should be mindful that focus groups do not represent the points of view of individuals (Okoko 2023).

Focus groups with Gypsies and Travellers

In total, five focus groups were conducted, two with Gypsies and Travellers and three with Roma. The focus groups with Gypsies and Travellers were conducted towards the end month of September 2023. Both focus groups were with residents of two sites in Cardiff. The first focus group was composed by 6 people in total, 5 females and 1 male, aged between 24 and 50 years old. The second focus group was made up of 5 females, aged between 20 and 75. It is important to note the reason for the imbalance in the sex of the informants. Gypsy and Traveller males are usually the primary breadwinners in their families and thus their opinions could not be engaged as they ought to work in order to earn a living. Even males, members of Gypsy and Traveller communities, who are in retirement age work, as long as they are able to, and they are not disabled. The focus groups with the Gypsies and Travellers were conducted by a member of the community.

Focus groups with Roma

The three focus groups with the Romani groups were conducted toward the end of September and the early dates of October 2023. All Roma informants in this study live in Newport, south Wales, some in privately rented houses, some in council flats and others in temporary accommodation provided by the Newport City Council. The Romani informants are originally from Slovakia and the Czechia. Informants therefore are multilingual, speaking their mother tongue Romanes, Slovak, Czech, and English (their command of English differing depending on their age and educational levels). The Roma focus groups were thus conducted in a mix of languages, i.e., English, Romanes, Slovak and Czech by a representative of their own communities. All respondents are literate, with the younger Roma attending schools in Wales while the older have completed a least primary school level of education in their original countries, Slovakia and Czechia.

Analysis of the Consultations with Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

For the sake of this analysis, the results of the focus groups would be presented first as Gypsies and Travellers Focus Groups 1 and 2, on the one hand, and Roma Focus Groups, on the other. As outlined in the above, this is due to the different character of the groups, their different needs and the issues they may be facing.

This study has been interested to present the views, needs, sentiments, opinions of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the areas of **Local Environment**, **Recreation**, **Food and Food Culture**, and **Leadership, Representation, and Role Models**.

I. *Focus Groups with Gypsies & Travellers (1 and 2)*

1. Local Environment

All respondents of the focus groups conducted with Gypsies and Travellers described their local environment, or the places they currently occupy as quite poor, with very low standards of living. One of the Gypsy/Traveller sites was described to be located by a scrap metal yard, sewage works, main route for Heavy Goods Vehicles, a motor bike track and a rubbish tip. The place was described as dirty, dusty and quite problematic, especially in the summer months then they would have unpleasant smells and problems with flies. The second Gypsy/Traveller site was described as small, surrounded by a wooden fence and farm-style metal gates. All respondents wished for cleaner air, better living conditions, access to public transport, and better ways to access electricity and water. Gypsy/Traveller Focus Group 2 pay as they go for their electricity and water, and the payment would need to be done in person to the warden who is on the site, however, inaccessible out of office hours. Gypsy and Traveller sites were recognised as not suitable to live in the long run and respondents wish their kids would not live in such conditions. No footpaths, dust from the scrap metal yard and the busy road, issues of fly tipping were issues that were raised by respondents from Focus Group 1. The participants of Focus Group 2 wished for a higher standard of living as they would complain from bad smell of sewage, cold and damp toilet blocks, and cleaner air as their site is in proximity to a soil suppliers company, Neals Topsoil, which on a windy day would affect the residents of the site covering them in red mud. Similarly, residents from Focus Group 1 shared that most of them suffer with bad chests due to their proximity to the steel works; they shared they their windows have rust spots and that they would be covered with dust and dirt. There are issues with fly tipping, which have been reported to the local council site officer, however, the issue has persisted. There was an identified feeling that "nothing is ever done. We are left and we feel we are forgotten about." (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 1).

Recycling in both of the studied Gypsy/Traveller sites does not exist. Residents reported that there are no bins provided for that purpose, that rubbish bin trucks may have a hard time accessing the sites, and that it may, in fact, cause more issues in their places as there may be even more issues "with rubbish everywhere on [their] site." (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 1). Therefore, the members of the Gypsy and Travellers communities, in this study, do not recycle. Respondents of the one of the focus groups shared they are not aware where the closest recycling points may be while respondents from the second focus group shared that if they took their rubbish to the nearest tip themselves, which is around 2 miles away from them, they would be charged. Thus, recycling does not seem to be part of the culture of our Gypsy and Traveller communities.

On that topic of mindset of sustainability thinking about the future, our Gypsy and Traveller informants do not appear to be in the habit of taking their shoes or electronic gadgets to be repaired. Instead, they are used to throwing the old/broken ones away and purchasing new ones as that was recognised to be more financially sensible. One way the informants contribute towards reducing waste and sustainability is through their tendency to pass down baby/children's clothes to either family members who may use them or to donate them in clothes banks. None of the respondents were aware that Wales is the third country in the

world for municipal recycling and it does not appear that issues of sustainability and climate change are ones that that occupy their consciousness and inform their life-choices and decisions in their daily lives.

2. Recreation

It should be first noted that the Gypsy/Traveller informants of this study do recognise that their home spaces, or the sites they have been living in, do not serve their ideal purpose, i.e., to provide a safe, pleasant space where residents recreate, re-charge, re-unite and nurture their selves and their needs. As noted above, the air quality in both sites have been identified by its residents as quite problematic, its air being polluted and unpleasant with dust due to the proximity of to a scrap metal yard, a major road, sewage works, as is the case with one of the focus groups, and a soil suppliers' company, as in the case with the second. The respondents use kitchens and toilet blocks which are located separately from the caravans they would normally live in, and these spaces are described as in "desperate" need of repairs, with holes, cracks, cold and damp (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 1). Respondents from one of the focus groups shared there is no green space, no pavements and that their space is dangerous, especially for their children, as they are in a dangerous proximity to a busy main road. The respondents of the second focus group spoke about their space being quite small, that can fit only a car and a caravan, without any extra space. The closest green space available for the respondents of focus group one was described as "not nice" and really had to reach as they would have to cross a dangerously busy road. Thus, their nearest park does not serve any purpose to them, apart from a couple of their members who keep their horses in the park. For the respondents of second focus group with Gypsies and Travellers, the closest green space to them is a private land which is not available to them, understanding they would be breaking the law for trespassing.

It does not appear that our Gypsy and Traveller informants are in the habit of visiting parks or the countryside for the purpose of recreation, such as walks, outings, picknicks, etc. They would appreciate, nevertheless, the open space and the clean air of the countryside. The factor that seems to affect and influence their decision to go to the countryside is the fact that they would have to drive outside of the town to access them. Going to the seaside, however, is more common for our informants. They expressed their tendency to go to the seaside with their family and kids when the weather is nice in the summer months, sometimes twice a twice. The factor that would influence their decisions to visit the seaside would be how far they would need to drive to reach it as well as whether it would be easy to park their vehicles, as that has been identified by one of the focus groups as problematic.

3. Food and Food culture

Overall, the Gypsy and Traveller informants of this study purchase their food, cook and eat at home. The most important factor for the Gypsies and Travellers when it comes to food is how fresh food is. They would source their meet fresh from butcher's shops and informants shared that some of them can be very particular when it comes to purchasing meat and they would ensure they examine now only how fresh the meat it and how it looks but also the hygiene in the shop. They shared that they judge whether the shop is clean and whether they could trust that the products the butcher's sell would be clean and fresh. Also, apart from

making sure they buy clean and fresh meat, which is a clear priority, they would consider its price. Furthermore, they would go to farmer's markets so that they can get fresh food products. The informants seem to be aware farmers' markets offer better quality foods and they would consciously frequent them to buy their food. Thus, many of them would look for and prefer to buy local food, sourced locally or elsewhere in the UK. Furthermore, they shared that some of them would not trust food sourced outside the UK. That is because they would not trust that certain foods, or meat, would match its description, fearing that "they could be eating anything." (*Focus group with Gypsies and Travellers* 2). The most crucial factor, nevertheless, is that Gypsies and Travellers care that they purchase fresh and clean food with origins that they trust. "[In] today's world, you don't know what's in some foods [when they buy it]" a response that came out in consultation with Focus Group 1 which explains why they would not trust imported foods.

Gypsies and Travellers would cook and eat at home most of the time. Occasionally, at special occasions such as birthdays, they would go to eat out in the local pub, *Toby Carvery*, *Weatherspoon*, or restaurants offering Lebanese food. Also, they would go out if restaurants have special offers for food such as 'buy one, get one free.' The identified issue by both focus groups was that they sometimes come across restaurants that may ask them to pay for their food in advance, or not let them come into the premises under the pretext that they are "fully booked," (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 2) and because they do not have reservations. "Now that could be a problem if we don't book a table. Many places will turn us away or we will have to pay our food before we eat." – this was another quote from focus group 1 in support of the discrimination that still can be found against their communities. Such instances are directly linked with discrimination and anti-Gypsyism and is linked with the fear of businesses that Gypsies and Travellers cannot be trusted especially as customers who would pay for the food they have consumed.

With regards to Gypsies and Travellers growing their own food in designated spaces such as allotments and community gardens, we had mix responses. Some shared that it would be nice to grow their food themselves, others said it would take too long to grow, some respondents said they do not particularly like the idea as they would have to drive to access their plots, while some respondents said that it would be difficult to work on the land because of their health conditions.

Growing their own food on their sites was recognised as unreasonable, unfeasible, and unsuitable due to them not having access to such land, and because of pollution. Overall, it could be concluded that Gypsies and Travellers do not seem aware of the other benefits of having an allotment or engaging in community growing related to better health, sense of wellbeing and for the purpose of recreation. Therefore, the local council and other and other civic initiatives could do more to raise awareness among Gypsy and Traveller communities of the benefits of allotments and community gardens/ growing.

4. Leadership, Representation and Role Models

With regards to the low level of representation of ethnic minorities and in decision-making forums in the fields of environment, climate change, and rural affairs, the stance of the Gypsy and Traveller respondents was quite clear. They expressed their frustration that they felt "just

left," that "nothing is ever done," and that there are "only promises from the local councillor" (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 1). There was a shared sentiment among all respondents that when they do speak out and voice their concerns, issues, needs, and opinions they are not never heard. Some respondents suggested that officials should visit their sites personally, see for themselves what the issues really are and then act upon that. There are also organisations that are supposed to help Gypsies and Travellers which, the respondents emphasised, includes lobbing and advocacy. Members of the community expressed their regret that they do not see these 'representatives' or members of civic organisations either and that they feel "used because they are tired of speaking out" (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 1). "Many of them don't know about Welsh Government. All they know is that there are Members of Parliament who make decisions for them" (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 2). Therefore, respondents agreed that the lack of representation of their communities on boards and levels of decision-making should include members of Gypsy and Traveller communities, "not people who have read about them" (*Focus Group with Gypsies and Travellers* 2). Thus, there is a clear identified need that officials already working on GRT affairs are disconnected from the real life and needs of the communities. The respondents agreed that they do know who is supposed to represent them, in what capacity, and how are decisions on a higher, strategic and political levels being taken if there is no real consultation with the communities.

II. *Roma Focus Groups (1, 2 & 3)*

Roma Focus Group 1 was composed of 4 informants. The consultation was conducted on September 26, 2023, with a group of young Roma participants, aged between 18 and 25, in English, Slovak and Czech languages. One of the participants had an equivalent of National Vocational Qualification level of Education in hospitality from their home country; two of the young participants had attended compulsory education in Wales, awaiting GCSE results, while another one has been excluded from education in Year 9. At the time of the consultation, none of the participants were working or employed. All the informants of the focus group were parents with the age of their children ranging between 3 months and 4-year-olds. *Roma Focus Group 1* was also deliberately formed seeking the opinions and view of younger Roma. The other two focus groups with Roma were mixed groups, composed of informants of different ages.

Roma Focus Group 2 was composed of 6 participants, aged between 23 and 63. There were participants who were single, married, had children, and some had grandchildren. The language was conducted in Czech. *Roma Focus Group 3* was composed of 5 participants, age ranging between 18 and 68. The country of origin was Slovakia and the language the focus group was conducted was Romani.

1. Local Environment

Roma Focus Groups 2 & 3 described their local environment as good in the sense that they have good relationships in the neighbourhood and with their neighbours and that they do not feel directly discriminated against. Further elaboration in the groups 1 and 3 revealed that participants had concerns about the litter, smell, noise, traffic, and the safety in their local environment. They found it as unsafe and dangerous, as they do not feel comfortable to let

their children go outside unsupervised fearing that somebody may harm them or that someone may try to sell them drugs. *Roma Focus Group 3* shared there are drug problems in the neighbourhood and they knew drugs are being sold outside. Similarly, *Roma Focus Group 1* shared that the environment is unsafe with people gathering and fighting on the streets. Parents shared this would disturb their children and wake them up when there were arguments and fights in the night. They did not feel safe to walk on their own on the streets with their children. The Roma informants shared they did not want to use the local playgrounds as they felt intimidated by strange individuals, litter, cigarette, and marihuana butts. About their local environment, respondents in *Roma Focus Group 3* shared there are no play parks in their vicinity suitable for their children and that people let their dogs to wander about freely which was identified by the respondents as bothersome and as a source of fear.

The Roma participants had mixed responses regarding the air quality. Some participants found no particular problem with the quality of the air and claimed they never thought about it before. However, one of the participants in *Roma Focus Group 1* who suffers with asthma asserted that the air is dusty and polluted as they had asthma attacks quite often.

All participants of *Roma Focus Group 1* agreed that fly tipping is an issue and that it must be dealt with. It was reported that rubbish is the source of nasty smells it attracts flies. Participants shared that that provided rubbish bins are too small, that it had to be picked up more often by the Council and that people must leave their rubbish next to the bins. This as a result contributed to litter being spread about outside further helped by animals on the streets.

There were mixed responses when the topic of recycling was raised. The Roma informants were aware that they were supposed to recycle. Some found recycling as “boring,” others recycled because their bins were found to be too small and thus recycling helped them to “not to have too much rubbish in one bag” and from that aspect it was appreciated as being “a good thing,” and a third group shared they sort out their rubbish at home but they did not know what happens with the rubbish once they get rid of it. Overall, the Romani respondents did not appear to be aware where is the closest recycling point. In one of the focus groups respondents shared that they tried to use the recycling point next to their block of flats, however, they were made aware that they are not allowed to use them.

All participants were aware of the whereabouts of charity shops available to them. The younger groups of respondents agreed that shopping from a charity shop is a sign of poverty thus, avoiding it. Other focus groups shared that they would frequent charity shops only when they could not afford to buy brand new clothes and shoes. Overall, nobody seemed to be in the habit, or inclined, to repair their shoes by the cobbler’s shop. A suggestion that came out as a result of the consultation was that people in Wales, should be offered incentives to recycle. They gave the example of the existence of schemes in Slovakia and Czechia where members of the public would pay a deposit for a plastic bottle which they would have to return to the shop to get their money back once they are finished using the bottle. Also, they thought people should be rewarded and paid for them bringing paper to be recycled at designated collection points.

2. Recreation

The Romani respondents were aware of two parks in Newport which were within walking distance - Pill Recreation Ground and Belle Vue Park. The younger respondents of focus group 1 shared they would use Pill Park's playground because it is more suitable for their children but also for family picknicks. They also said that the grounds in that park are mostly used by people who smoke – which was negatively appreciated and a factor which makes them tray to stay away from the park. Belle Vue Park offers court area for sports and that would attract the Romani respondents to frequent it. Respondents in all focus groups shared they use the parks for family outings, picknicks, and for the sake of their children where they would play but they wished they could be allowed to light a campfire and do barbeques. Apart from visiting the parks, they are not in the habit of going to the seaside. That is mainly because they do not seem to be familiar with the area and because they would stay home to take care of their kids. The younger group of the focus groups shared they have gone to the seaside once on a community trip.

Overall, all the informants of the focus groups seemed they are not aware of more activities in their neighbourhoods; "sometimes we don't go, because we don't know anything here" (*Roma Focus Group 3*), apart from going to the nearby parks. They all appreciated positively the parks but they wished they would be allowed to start an open fire and to be able to go to places where they could all "gather as a community, sit around, sing and dance" (*Roma Focus Group 1*).

It is important to note that the Roma informants spoke about some of community outings that the charity *Romani Cultural and Arts Company* (*RCAC*) has organised for them. In these initiatives, they would go to different places in nature and in the countryside as part of the *Travelling Back to Nature* Project, run by the RCAC, as a community and do things together which was well-appreciated by them, "otherwise, we don't go anywhere" (*Roma Focus Group 3*). Also, it is informative to note that because of the *Travelling Back to Nature Project* the respondents have been using the local parks more. This is to suggest that the Roma informants have experienced the benefits of being in the nature and now they would consciously try to access it. Apart from that, there were no reported issues of discrimination or anything preventing the Roma from taking advantage of their local environment.

3. Food and Food Culture

There were two factors that appeared to determine the purchase of food for of all Romani respondents – the price and the expiration of the food. When our Roma respondents purchase their produce, they do not seem to mind where it is coming from. Some shared they have heard about and come across 'organic' food, however, they do not know what it is precisely or its significance. Other labels/certificates such as 'local,' 'Welsh,' 'Red Tractor,' 'British Lion' or the 'animal welfare' would bear no meaning for our Romani informants. Instead, they would seek to purchase "cheap" ingredients (*Roma Focus Group 2*), or products that are "not so expensive" (*Roma Focus Group 1*) for their home meals. They would also try to source products and cook meals that they are familiar with, i.e., Czech and Slovak. Going out to eat was reported to be a rare occasion. If they did go out, they would go to fast food restaurants such as McDonalds, KFC, or kebab places but also Indian restaurants. All of this,

however, would depend on whether they could afford it. Only one of the informants in *Roma Focus Group 1* eats out on a regular basis who prefers the restaurant *Ostro Peri Peri*, in Cardiff, which attracts customers with its "delicious food" and "completive prices" (https://ostrocardiff.com).

None of the Romani participants were growing their own food and they shared they do not have the space to do that. While the young participants were not eager to do grow their own food, the informants of the other two focus group appeared willing to grow vegetables and other fruits. It also appeared that they have never heard of allotments or community gardens or growing and how could they go about accessing them.

4. Leadership, Representation and Role Models

One of the themes that emerged when discussing the lack of representation of Roma in the decision-making on higher/political levels was the identified need for access of more information and the greater need of support for the Roma living in Wales. *Roma Focus Group 1* agreed there is a lack of representation of Roma, however, they disagreed on how it would be enacted and how exactly it would represent them. Some of the male participants of the group voiced that there should be "members of the [Roma] community" who "should be employed to work alongside officers to share their community's views." The female informants of the group, in contrast, disagreed on this approach and instead proposed that views should be solicited via "individual surveys" – or talking to individual families or individuals from the Romani communities and asking for their opinions. This way, they would feel freer to speak out about their needs, rather than not for fear of being judged by other members of their community. The women in the group thus agreed that if an individual would be chosen from the community as a representative, this would create "a lot of arguments, conflicts and mistrust within the Roma community" (*Roma Focus Group 1*).

Discussion

The issues that Gypsies and Travellers brought up revolve predominantly around their current environment and spaces. They identified poor air quality linked with pollution and dust because of the location of their sites. Proximity to a scrap metal yard, a busy road with HGV vehicles, sewage works, a motor bike track, and a rubbish tip, as in the case of one of the focus groups with Gypsies and Travellers, and small pitches that are surrounded with wood fences and metal gates, proximity to a soil suppliers company which spreads dust to the site, lack of appropriate kids play area, cold, damp, rubbish on the site, but also nasty smells of sewage and identified problem with flies, especially under the summer, as indicated by second focus group – all indicate the especially problematic spaces Gypsy and Traveller sites have taken. This impacts on not only their overall sense of wellbeing and their health but also their sense of place within the larger society. Also, the fact that they cannot have access to water and electricity on an ongoing basis further compounds their downplayed sense of place in the society and wellbeing – peripheral spaces where they feel isolated, forgotten and unwanted.

Issues of sustainability and views of the future for the Gypsies and Travellers should be thus considered through this prism of making changes that would directly and positively impact

the quality of the places they currently occupy. Respondents wished for a better life and future for their children and grandchildren. It should be of no surprise that the sentiment of the informants of the focus groups with Gypsies and Travellers was one desperation and abandonment. Within these themes that we presented above we should appreciate their feelings of being forgotten and ignored by the authorities and service providers.

We learnt by the focus groups that the level of interest in community gardens/ growing or allotments among Gypsies and Travellers was low and that is because they have currently identified other, more important issues related to their wishes to live more dignified lives and enjoy better health. Even when they would go to eat out, they would occasionally feel singled out by restaurants refusing to take them in, under the pretext their premises are "fully booked,' or when restaurants would ask them to pay for their orders in advance.

Discussions around the theme of representation of Gypsies and Travellers on boards in decision-making forums related to the environment, climate change and rural affairs revealed their shared believes that government officials or councillors should do much more visiting personally the sites of Gypsies and Traveller and consulting with them. This would also address the identified issue that Gypsies and Travellers are not aware who is in charge for their communities, who represents them, and who takes decisions on their behalf. This would hopefully bridge a gap of knowledge whereby decisions would no longer be taken on their behalf by people who are detached or out of touch as they have been borrowing their 'knowledge' based on various readings, documents, or literature. Furthermore, some informants agreed that there would be a great value if a representative of their communities were promoted as their advocate as they would be aware of the current problems, issues and needs Gypsies and Travellers may be facing or struggling with.

The three focus groups with Roma revealed different results compared to the ones of the Gypsies and Travellers. This is because they do not consider living on traveller sites or in caravans as part of their culture and because they are comparatively recent residents/citizens of the UK. The Romani culture should be understood as a mix of their countries of birth (in this case Slovakia and Czechia), their specific Romani culture and also their efforts to fit into the British culture.

The Roma did not bring any issues of discrimination in the focus groups. They appreciated their places as "good" in the sense that they have good relations with their neighbours and they get along well. This should be understood as relative to their experiences as Roma in their home countries where they are used to more often and direct discrimination against them. This also suggests that they are mindful of their own Romani identities and the stigma they may bring. By the focus groups it became clear that the Roma wish to fully integrate into the Welsh society and that is why wanted easier access to information so that they become aware of what type of services are available to them, their rights and who should they contact when they need advice and help.

It is sensible to see that our Roma informants wished to live in a better society, places and environment that is safer and cleaner for them and the future generations.

Just like the Gypsy and Traveller informants of this study, the Roma cook and eat their food at home but, in contrast to the Gypsy and Traveller informants, they consider the affordability to be the most important factor when they purchase their food and thus, they do not mind whether the purchased food is imported (Gypsies and Travellers would not buy food which was not local/British).

The specific support that the Roma in Wales need should be understood in the context of their identities – a community which lives simultaneously within their own Romani community and at the same time as part of the lager society. Our Romani informants appeared to prefer to socialise with their own community and they wish. This is important for them as it sustains their identities by being together. We learnt that Roma wish that they have the opportunity, and the space, to get together and socialise but also study and play music, and dance – these are identified elements that contribute toward nurturing their Romani identities, sustaining their culture, and thus contribute to their overall sense of wellbeing. At the same time, our Romani informants showed eagerness to be part of the larger Welsh society as they have mindfully begun to call it 'home.' Thus, they wish to fully integrate in the Welsh society by having access to information and therefore the same knowledge, rights and obligations as the rest which would result in greater feelings of belonging and of equality.

Conclusion

This work sought to engage with members of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in a discussion as part of the Welsh Government initiative working towards a better and a racist-free Wales. These discussions were extremely useful as they give us a real understanding of the feelings, opinions, needs, requests and dreams of a group of people, which has been collectively termed as GRT (Gypsies Roma and Travellers) due to their perceived common (travelling) lifestyle, labels, negative stereotypes and the issues that come with these. These communities are distinct, however. Some Gypsies and Travellers consider that living in caravan sites is part of their identities and culture and that is important to them. Roma communities prefer to live in all types of houses and even though they have a memory of their travelling lifestyles, they travel not any differently than any other person in today's modern age. The identified issues therefore between the two groups, Gypsies and Travellers, on the one hand, and Roma, on the other, are different. Poor health is an issue for the Gypsies and Travellers due to the harshness of living on their sites. In our focus groups we saw that these are far from ideal with proximity to sources of pollution, sites are spatially segregated and lack appropriate utility rooms such as kitchens, bathrooms, washing areas, or play areas for the kids. They are not only geographically segregated and separate from the rest, but they feel completely abandoned, ignored, and left to face with their issues alone, without the help of government or the council. This is how we should better understand the poor physical and mental health of Gypsies and Travellers and their lower life expectancy (Greenfields & Brindley 2016). The Roma have different needs and these are related to the need to raise their awareness about how to better integrate into the larger society and access valuable information related to living in the Welsh society. At the same time, it was important for them that they can sustain their Romani identities and could come together and do thigs collectively. Personal, qualitative consultations with members of the GRT communities are essential and were identified as one of the only ways if policymakers were genuine in their understanding their specific issues and needs but also in creating policies that are truly impactful and meaningful. This is irrespective of whether or not the Welsh Government would decide to elect members

of the GRT communities to serve as permanent officials in government, whether GRT members would be employed as a consultants, or if government officials are simply conducting regular consultations with the communities.

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